United Nations E/CONF.105/91

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
30 June 2017

Original: English

Eleventh United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names
New York, 8-17 August 2017
Item 9 (a) of the provisional agenda*
National standardization: field collection of names

What can be done when crowdsourcing does not work

Summary**

The report pertains to issues relating to crowdsourcing.

Recently, the gathering of comprehensive and accurate sets of national geographical names has been threatened by the collection of names by means that do not involve fieldwork, in particular digital crowdsourcing.

While digital crowdsourcing projects may succeed in contributing enormously to cultural heritage and history, the collection of geographical names in some countries or areas using this method may not show such successful results when the intention is to gather historical information on the names and when it comes to collecting and promoting minority names. In such cases, crowdsourcing projects often fail to reach the most suitable volunteers: older persons who do not know how to contribute digitally — and are often uninterested in dealing with digital technology — and/or people who have no access at all to such technology. In such cases, fieldwork is the most efficient way to reach these people.

At the same time, it is not possible to ignore the high costs and the large amount of time involved in fieldwork operations, which make this activity difficult or even impossible for national institutions responsible for the collection of geographical names to carry out.

Suggested in the report is the establishment of a partnership between national institutions responsible for the collection of geographical names and educational institutions as an additional means of obtaining information on geographical names in areas where crowdsourcing may fail.

* E/CONF.105/1.

** The full report was prepared by Ana Cristina da Rocha Bérenger Resende, Vania Nagem, Marcia Mathias, Beatriz Souza Pinto, Antônio Jurandir Constantino de Oliveira, José Carlos Corrêa and Américo de Lima Ferreira, Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics. The report will be available from http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/ungegnConf11.html, in the language of submission only, as document E/CONF.105/91/CRP.91.

17-09407 (E) 070717

Please recycle